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Ó Domhnaill Abú

O'Donnell Clan

Newsletter No. 25

Winter 1997

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES

Visiting Donegal Abbey during the '92 Clan Gathering.

The Earldom Of Tyrconnell and Related Matters

1. The first outsider to claim lordship over Tyrconnell was Maurice Fitzgerald, Lord Justice of Ireland, A.D. 1241, as appears from a little volume, dating from 1590, in the Genealogical Office, Dublin (G.O. Ms. 34, p. 26). According to John W. Papworth and Alfred W. Morant, "An Alphabetical Dictionary of Coats of Arms belonging to Families in Great Britain and Ireland, forming an Extensive Ordinary of British Armorials" (London - 1877), Fitzgerald was given the title "Earl of Tyrconnell." I have ascertained from the Chief Herald that there is no record in his office of the conferring of this title. Nothing is reflected in the Fitzgerald Arms (Argent a Saltire Gules) to suggest a Tyrconnell connection. Maurice was defeated by Gofreidh O'Donnell, (Chief 1248-58) whom he met in personal combat at the battle of Credran Cille in Roscede(Drumcliffe, Co. Sligo) in 1256. Both subsequently died of their wounds. I have found no further mention of any Fitzgerald claim to O'Donnell's country.

2. On 28th August 1541 the Lord Deputy and Council recommended that Manus O'Donnell(Chief 1537-63) should be created Earl of Tyrconnell or Sligo, but nothing more was done (State Papers, Henry VIII, vol. 11, pp. 316/7).

3. On 22 May 1561 Queen Elizabeth wrote to the Lord Deputy that it was proposed to create Calvagh (Chief 1563-6) Earl of Tyrconnell, and went so far as to say that the necessary patent had been made out. The Lord Deputy in acknowledging receipt on 17 July following stated that no "patent was passed by the Irish Executive or enrolled." After his father's death (No. 2 above) Calvagh was "granted the style and dignity of O'Donnell and appointed Captain of Tyrconnell." He received no other title (Geoffrey H. White, "The Complete Peerage," vol. XII, part II, pp. 110/1).

4. Red Hugh (Chief 1592-1602) never made peace with the English and consequently the question of a foreign title did not arise.

5. Rory O'Donnell (brother of Red Hugh) made his submission, following the defeat at Kinsale, in 1602. He was knighted and created Earl of Tyrconnell, 29 September 1603. Following his flight of 1607 a Bill of Attainder was brought in in 1614 that, inter alia, stripped him of all his honours. (White, op. cit., pp. 112/3).

6. After Rory's death his son, Hugh, less than one year old when brought on the flight of 1607, was known as the Titular Earl of Tyrconnell on the Continent. (Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., "Wild Geese in Spanish Flanders, 1582-1700," passim). He died without issue in 1642.

7. Neill Garbh O'Donnell (who died in the Tower of London in 1626) received a grant from Elizabeth, 18 March 1601, "of the custody of the country or territory of Tyrconnell" to hold during pleasure (Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery, Elizabeth, vol. II, p. 587). There is no mention of a title nor is there any record of Neill Garbh having taken out any Patent.

8. Following Earl Rory's attainder the title "Earl of Tyrconnell" was given to Lord Fitzwilliam of Merrion, but it expired in 4 years (Sir Bernard Burke, "The Vicissitudes of Families," vol. 11, pp. 36/7).

9. It was next conferred on the Talbots of Malahide, but again fell by attainder (Burke, Loc. cit.).

10. After Talbot it was given to an English Baronet named Brownlow, and again became extinct (Burke, loc. cit.).

11. The last to receive it was another English family called Carpenter (Burke, loc. cit.).

12. Richard Talbot, King James's Lord Lieutenant of Ireland had the title "Duke of Tyrconnell" (O'Hart, "Irish Pedigrees," p. 265).

13. The Chichesters became Earls of Donegal (O'Hart, loc. cit.).

14. Hugh O'Donnell of Larkfield (d. 1754) was known locally as "Earl of Tyrconnell" (John O'Donovan, Appendix to the Annals of the Four Masters (1848 edition) vol. III, p. 2358). He is buried in Creevelea Abbey, Dromahair, Co. Leitrim, where his tombstone, bearing the family arms, is called "The Earl's Tombstone" (Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, vol. XLVI, part II, 1926, pp. 178/80).

15. The Rev. Constantine O'Donel (d. 1890), senior of the Larkfield Branch of the Family, contemplated petitioning Queen Victoria to revive the Newport Baronetcy (that became extinct with the death of Sir George Glendinning O'Donel on 22 January 1889) in his person. He went so far as to draft the Petition. After making his case for the revival of the Baronetcy he continued: "Your Memorialist is also heir-at-law to Roderick, son of Hugh, Prince of Tyrconel, who was created Earl of Tyrconel and Baron O'Donel of Donegal, 4th September 1603, but which title was attained. That if the attainder was removed and the Earldom restored Memorialist would be the one to inherit as Head of the O'Donel of Tyrconel family." He proceeded no further with the matter (Uiberacker-O'Donell Archives, Austria).

16. The Chief Herald of Ireland recognised John O'Donel (1894-1971) of the Larkfield Branch as "O Domhnaill Clann Dálaigh - Chief of the Name" and gave official notice of such in IRIS OIFIGIUL, 11 September 1945.

17. Upon John's death on 12 September 1971 he was succeeded by his son, Hugh (b. 1940), a Franciscan Father on the Zimbabwe mission, who is now the Head of the Clan. Fr. Hugh is the last male member of the Main Line in Ireland, and, upon his demise, the Headship of the O'Donnells will pass to the Spanish Branch of the Family.

18. Col. Maximilian Karl Lamoral O'Donell, aide-de-camp to Emperor Frans Josef of Austria saved His Majesty from assassination in Vienna in February 1853, and, as a reward, was admitted to that country's Peerage, with the title of "Count" by Patent published in "Oesterreichnischer Soldate Freund" of 26 October 1853. He died without issue 14 July 1895.

19. The Austrian title of "Count" is personal to the holder and his descendants. It cannot be inherited by a relative. Consequently, by special Imperial favour, Maximilian's brother, Maurice O'Donell (1815-1890), was granted another Patent, dated 25 September 1866, conferring a similar title on him and his descendants. They are known as "Count O'Donell von Tyrconnell". The present holder of the title is Count Gabriel O'Donell (b. 1922). Their Arms are those of O'Donnell impaling Habsburg (the latter an honour conferred on Maximilian and continued for Maurice).

20. The Spanish Branch of the Family, represented by the Dukes of Tetuan, does not lay any claim to the ancient territory of Tyrconnell among their many titles. Their Arms are similar to those of their Austrian cousins (but without Habsburg).

21.Hugh O'Donnell (b.1948), Count of Lucena, son of the Duke of Tetuan, has taken the Arms of Red Hugh (No. 4 above) that appears on the seal of an autograph letter, dated 16 May 1596, in the Spanish National Archives, Simancas.

Rupert S. O Cochlain,
5 May, 1983.

1596

(Here continues the career of the great Red Hugh O'Donnell after 1595 i.e. where I left off in ODA No. 23)

In May 1596 a Spanish nobleman, Don Alonzo Cobos, was sent by the King of Spain to evaluate the Irish situation. He landed at Killybegs and was escorted by local nobles through Bearnas Mór to Lifford where Red Hugh resided at the time. Here he spent three days and three nights with O'Donnell during which time he was well briefed on the campaign so far and given a letter for King Philip petitioning immediate assistance.

Red Hugh with some soldiers accompanied Cobos on his return to Killybegs as Bearnas Mór was "*an intricate mountain, difficult to pass over, and it was a place of refuge for robbers and rogues, robbing and plundering until Aodh Rua banished them,....*"

We read that before his departure, "*O Domhnaill's people gave him plenty of the flesh meat of fat hinds and whitefleeced sheep.*" He sailed, "*with the first breeze of wind from the north-east, keeping the shore of Ireland on the port hand.....until he reached Spain.*"

In June, Red Hugh received word that the Queen's General of War in Ireland, Sir John Norris, with an army of approx. 20,000 men was approaching Connacht with the intention of subjecting the province "*wholly and entirely, to the English Sovereign.*" According to some records, this army, composed of both English soldiers and native clansmen, was the largest ever seen in that part of the country. Meeting with no opposition, they marched until they pitched camp on the River Robe.

O'Donnell moved immediately, having already sent messengers summoning the Connacht Clans to join him at a certain point not far from Norris's camp. Soon, Red Hugh with his Tyrconnell men and Connacht men faced Norris from the opposite bank of the river.

"*There was much parleying to and fro for peace and amity between them, but it was not so in truth, they were spying and circumventing and deceiving each other if they could.*" Finally, with their supplies running low, the English withdrew, having "*effected nothing against the Irish.*"

O'Donnell and his men returned to their homes.

The English Council in Dublin realising O'Neill and O'Donnell's strength and fearing Spanish involvement(Cobos's visit hadn't gone un-noticed) decided that the best course of action for the time being was to "*offer peace and friendship to them.*" Two ambassadors were selected and sent to Dundalk. A messenger was sent from there to O'Neill inviting him and O'Donnell to come to talk. Eventually, the two Chiefs with a company of cavalry arrived at Dundalk and the talks began. The two English ambassadors outlined all the terms being offered by the Lord Deputy and his Council but O'Donnell refused to accept anything, reminding those along with him of the falsehood of previous English promises.

The ambassadors returned to Dublin and reported to their superiors, who in turn, passed this information to Queen Elizabeth. The Queen, enraged, took some measures to deal with the situation. She had another army, numbering over 20,000 mustered. Sir Richard Bingham, then Governor of Connacht, was replaced by Sir Conyers Clifford. The latter, seemingly, was held in high regard by everyone including the Irish and upon his arrival in Connacht, several Clans *went over to him.* O'Connor Sligo returned form England "*having been appointed by the Queen to the command of many hundred troops and soldiers full ready to bring under her power those who were near him of the men of Ulster and Connacht. He came to Connacht immediately to fight in alliance with the English against Cenél Conaill.*" Some of his neighbouring Clans, now, switched their loyalty to him.

O'Donnell, on hearing of these developments, didn't wait to assemble all his forces but went immediately with what he had to Connacht, plundering "*O'Conor's subjects and friends, of whom we have spoken, in every place they were.....so that he did not leave a single beast with them; and he disturbed no one in the country but them.*"

O'Donnell, then, pitched his camp in Bréifne(Co. Leitrim) waiting for Christmas to pass and the rest of his forces to join him. And so ended 1596.

1597

By the end of January, with his forces assembled, Red Hugh made another incursion into Connacht all the way to Galway City. Having collected much plunder including a large number of cattle and sheep he made his back to Tír Chonaill leaving the Connacht people in little doubt as to who controlled that province.

O'Connor, Sligo with a large army of Irish and English pursued O'Donnell to avenge this action. Red Hugh happened to be camped not far away, just east of Sligo waiting for him. O'Connor was badly beaten and forced to retreat. O'Donnell, then, took most of his army back to Tyrconnell to rest but left some in Connacht under the command of his cousin, Niall Garbh, so as to be prepared to deal with any more trouble from the West. These soldiers continually harassed the Irish who had turned away from O'Donnell until most of them changed their minds and came back.

In April a ship from Spain landed in Killybegs on a fact-finding mission. Having met with Red Hugh in Donegal, they departed with "*gifts of hounds and horses*" and a full account of the campaign against the English.

In June, O'Donnell went once again on a tour of Connacht where he met with no resistance, Leaving his brother, Rory, in charge he returned to Donegal. About this time a new Lord Deputy, Lord Borough, was appointed to Ireland. He arrived bringing with him many soldiers and war equipment. Shortly after his arrival, he commanded the Governor of Connacht "*to go with his forces in full muster against Cénel Conaill.*" The Governor assembled "*all the English and Irish in the province that were obedient to him.*" When assembled, they numbered twenty two companies of infantry and ten squadrons of cavalry, "*with their strong coats of mail and their stout, long, broad-shouldered rivetted spears, and their loud-voiced sharp-sighted guns, and their slender, sharp, hard-tempered swords, with beautiful firmly-secured hafts, and their curve-crested hollow helmets, so that they were full sure there was not in the province of Ulster a power to cope with them on account of the outlandishness and strangeness of their arms, armour, and weapons, for the Irish had but few firearms then and did not wear armour like them.*"

They marched through Sligo and on until they reached the south bank of the Erne near Ballyshannon. Next morning, finding all the fords well guarded, they moved upstream and crossed at Athcúluain. But this ford was also guarded and fierce fighting took place. However the Irish defence was outnumbered and at last the English crossed loosing some of their men including Murchu O'Brian, Baron of Inchiquin who was "*struck by a bullet in the armpit, exactly at the opening of his plate-armour, so that he was pierced through from one armpit to the other, and though there were four or five thousand men about him they could not protect or assist him, for he fell from his horse in the deep part of the ford, so that the nobleman died in this wise. The army did not wait to pick up his body nor to bury it as was fitting, but they marched on in battle order....*"

Having crossed to the north of the river they now took up positions around Ballyshannon Castle and waited for the supply ships. These arrived the following day, Sunday, with artillery and necessary supplies. On Monday morning, having trained their guns at the castle the bombardment began. "*However, the attack which the foreigners made was of no avail, and it was better for them that they had not come on that expedition, for there were poured from the castle on them showers of bright fiery balls from the well planted straight-firing guns and from the costly muskets. Also stone showers of rough-pointed rocks, and heavy, massive stones, with beams and stakes, which happened to be on the battlements of the castle, so that their well made curved shields and their shining helmets were neither shelter nor protection for them, they were crushed and killed within their iron armour by the stout fusillade directed against them. When the soldiers were greatly massacred in this way, they could not endure to stay any further to be slaughtered.*" And so the attackers turned and left.

It is important to understand that Ballyshannon Castle was the home of the O'Donnell chieftains for many years until they built Donegal Castle in 1474 but even after moving residence to Donegal they still continued to use Ballyshannon. It was to Ballyshannon that Red Hugh returned after his escape from Dublin Castle in 1592. On this

1597

particular occasion Ballyshannon Castle was being defended by Hugh Crawford(a Scotch gallowglass) with eighty soldiers, six of whom were Spanish Armada survivors.

On the Saturday when the English arrived O'Donnell had only a small force which were gradually being added to as time went on. He was joined by Maguire, O'Rourke and others. Red Hugh at first avoided a full scale battle with the English but adopted the plan of constantly harassing them both day and night, making life very difficult for them and preventing them from getting any sleep. Eventually, the English totally exhausted for want of sleep and noticing the ever-increasing numbers of the Irish, decided to withdraw. Leaving many dead behind them along with their artillery and supplies, the English early on Thursday morning, 15th August, in desperation tried to negotiate a dangerous ford below Ballyshannon, known as 'Cosan na gCuradh'(Ford of the Champions). But, many men, women and horses were drowned and swept out to sea. Of those that crossed many were wounded including O'Connor Sligo.

O'Donnell's men, realising what was happening, grabbed their arms, crossed by one of the other fords and pursued them as far as Drumcliff harassing them all the way. Luckily for the English, an unusually heavy shower of rain fell making fighting difficult especially for the Irish. They, in their haste, had left without their cloaks or footwear and furthermore the tapers with which they ignited their muskets wouldn't stay lit. They, now, abandoned the chase and returned to camp while, "*the English escaped to their homes with sorrow and disgrace.*"

Shortly after, O'Neill requested O'Donnell's assistance as he was aware of the Lord Deputy and the Earl of Kildare marching against him with a large army. Assembling his forces, Red Hugh wasted no time in joining O'Neill. Lughaidh Ó Clérigh in *The Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell*, says(but Sean Ó Faolain in *The Great O'Neill*, differs greatly) that the two armies faced each other from opposite banks of the Ulster Blackwater where continuous skirmishes ensued but no major engagement. Then "*one day while they were thus engaged*" the Lord Deputy along with some other nobles decided to go to the summit of a nearby hill to survey the situation. While there, they were fiercely attacked by some Irish soldiers. Some of the nobles and English soldiers were killed; the Lord Deputy and Earl of Kildare received wounds from which both died within a week(O Faolain suggests the Lord Deputy was poisoned by the Irish). After this "*the English army returned home with grief and shame in this way.*" The Irish army returned to their homes "*cheerful and gladly after that victory.*"

Between then and the end of the year, O'Donnell made one more incursion into Connacht where he took much plunder from those not loyal to him. This was done so swiftly and stealthily that he was out of the Province before anyone had a chance to oppose him. "*No less was the chagrin and confusion of the Governor, Sir Conyers Clifford, for the plundering of the country which was under his yoke without putting up a fight even though his death should be the outcome...*" Between then and the end of the year "*no important fact was heard of.*"

(All quotes from *The LIfe of Aodh Rua O Domhnaill)*

With regard to Baron Inciquin, his body was recovered days later by one on the monks of Abbey Assaroe and was buried with dignity in the Abbey. This later became a matter of dispute between the Franciscans of Donegal Town and the Cistercians in Abbey Assaroe and was finally resolved in the Franciscans favour by Bishop Redmond O'Gallagher of Derry, Bishop Niall O'Boyle of Raphoe and O'Donnell himself. Baron Inciquin's body was removed from Abbey Assaroe to its final resting place in Donegal Abbey, because the ancestors of the O'Briens, like the O'Donnells, were interred in Franciscan soil. (Donegal Annual No. 48)

Sources used:

Annals of the Four Masters.

The Life of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill by Lughaidh Ó Clérigh, translated by Rev. Paul Walsh,

The Broken Sword of Ulster by Richard Cuninghame,

Ireland Under Elizabeth by Philip O'Sullivan Bear, translated by Matthew J. Byrne,

The Great O'Neill by Sean O Faolain

The 400th Anniversary of the Battle of Ballyshannon by Billy Finn in Donegal Annual No. 48.

New Members since No. 22

175 Kathleen Houston, Letterbrick, Cloghan, Lifford, C. Donegal.
176 Maureen Doohan, Killult, Falcaragh, Co. Donegal.
177 Adrian W. O'Donnell, 'Jesmond', 102 Campbell Drive, Wahroonga NSW, Australia 2076.
178 Patrick O'Donnell, RR3 Box 3971, Belton, Texas 79513, U.S.A.
179 Patrick O'Donnell, Box 76, Valley Lee, Maryland 20692, U.S.A.
180 Peggy O'Donnell, 8, Place Tomberg, Bte. 12, 1200 Brussels, Belgium.
181 John Colliton, 930 Murray Hill, Highland, MI. 48357, U.S.A.
182 Dr. Irene Montjoye, A-1030 Wien, Landstrasse 148/3/12, Austria.
183 Philomena O'Donnell, 39 Admiran Park, Stranorlar, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal.
184 Paddy O'Donnell, 40 Ballymongan, Castlederg, BT81 7HD, Co. Tyrone.
185 Anne O'Donnell, Ballyherrin, Kilmacrennan, Co. Donegal.
186 Gerard B. O'Donnell, 3335 White Hall Drive, Willow Grove, PA. 19090, U.S.A.
187 John Robert O'Donnell, Rockcliff, 6Switzerland Terrace, Off Queen's Promenade, Douglas, I.O.M.
188 Sean O'Donnell, Tullyvinney, Raphoe, Co. Donegal.
189 Robert Dale O'Donnell, 1248 Glacier Dr., Milpitas, Ca. 95035, U.S.A.

News

Colmcille Remembered.

Many events took place in Ireland, Scotland and indeed in other countries this year to commemorate the death of Colmcille(St. Columba) 1400 years ago. A great grandson of Conall Gulban, he belongs to Cénel Chonaill, or the descendants of Conall, as do O'Boyles, O'Gallaghers, O'Dohertys, O'Cannons and of course O'Donnells.

Of these celebrations, the two most memorable were the voyage to Iona and the Interdenominational service at Gartan. Colmcille, who was of royal stock and could have lived the life of a prince, opted for the church and became a priest. Having founded several religious houses in Ireland he moved to Iona, a Scottish island. From here, he and his monks christianised Scotland and part of England. Why he left Ireland is another story and one which I hope to write about in a later issue.

It was to Iona that 250 pilgrims, including many clergy, travelled on the 24th May. The first stop was Oban were we attended concelebrated Mass in the Cathedral. Afterwards we were treated to a concert of traditional Scottish dance, music and singing - all organised by Lady Frances Shand Kydd(mother of the late Princess Diana). The following morning we travelled to and across the Isle of Mull and from there to Iona where we attended Mass in the Abbey. After a quick look around it was back to the ferry and back to Derry.

Gartan, outside Letterkenny, being the place where Colmcille was born, was the scene of an inter-church service on the 9th of June, the anniversary of the Saint's death. It was important that an impressive commemoration should take place if it were to, even attempt, to match the one held one hundred years ago. The commemoration of 1897 is well recorded in a book entitled "The Gartan Festival". And taking into consideration the absence of motor transport and other facilities, one must agree that it was a great celebration. Congratulatory messages from many exiles including the O'Donnells of Spain and Austria were read out. This year's celebration, though very different in essence, was nevertheless, very enjoyable and impressive. Let's hope that the 2097 event will equal it's predecessors.

Micheline Kerney Walsh R.I.P.

It was with great shock and sorrow that I read of the death of Micheline K. Walsh on the 8th of May this year. She featured in ODA Nos. 6, 10,12,14 & 19. She had made a deep study of Irish documents in the Spanish archives especially those of O'Neill and O'Donnell. She had in her possession a match box full of sand which she had collected from those letters; sand was used in those days, instead of blotting paper, to absorb surplus ink. She had a deep feeling and understanding of those people and their times. I saw her weep while talking about the

disillusioned Hugh O'Neill in Rome after the death of Rory and Caffir O'Donnell.

She lectured at all of our Gatherings. For a person of such small stature she had great command of an audience. She always joked that microphones couldn't be lowered enough for her. Yet when she spoke, and especially when she paused between sentences, there wasn't a sound, her talks were so interesting. How rich we were when we had her; how poor we are without her?

Trócaire Dé d'a h-anam!

Henry O'Donnell strikes again.

Daniel makes presentation to Henry
photo by Conor Sinclair

Will we ever hear the end of this man? Once again he hit the headlines when in August of this year he swam from Tory Island to Arann More Island, a distance of over 24 miles in approx. ten and a half hours. This swim was longer than any of the other recognised long distance swims around these Islands and is now considered a great challenge. As well as a great achievement in itself this swim was also a fund-raising event, raising thousands of pounds for The Childrens" Hospital, Temple Street MRI Scanner Appeal.

Henry was honoured by the O'Donnell Clan Association at their Annual Dinner in Daniel O'Donnell's Viking House Hotel on the 20th Sept. A Donegal Crystal Torch, suitably inscribed, was presented to him on behalf of the Association by Daniel himself.

At the time of writing this article I hear that Henry received a Donegal Sportsman of the Year award last week(24th Oct.) and is to be the recipient of the Donegal People of the Year, Sports Category award in Letterkenny on the 14th of Nov. He deserves it all and more. I also hear he is busy training for World Masters Distance Swimming Championships 1998. We wish him all the best in all his future ventures.

New Book Launched

Vincent O'Donnell presents first copy of O'Donnells of Tír Chonaill to Roisin Coughlan
photo by Conor Sinclair.

At the afore-mentioned function in the Viking House Hotel a book entitled, **O'Donnells of Tír Chonaill** was launched. This publication is really a second edition of the one published at the 1989 Clan Gathering - **Clann Dálaigh**. The present edition is a 100 page, A5 volume containing most of the articles in the previous one along with the best from the **O Domhnaill Abú** Newsletters Nos. 10 to 24.

As the new edition is dedicated to Rupert S. O Cochláin who did so much research into the history of the O'Donnell Clan, the first copy was presented to his widow, Roisín(nee O'Donnell) by the editor, Vincent O'Donnell.

O'Donnells of Tír Chonaill sells at £5.50 which is a good buy for anyone wishing to have the best material from all Clan Newsletters to date. Published by the O'Donnell Clan Association, it is available at many shops in the County, from Ben O'Donnell, Lifford, Co. Donegal(secretary) and

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